



Living with Hepatitis C

What can I do?

Chances are, if you're reading this page and looking through this information packet, you or someone you know has been diagnosed with Hepatitis C. You may have many feelings about this, including fear, anger, depression or just numbness. You may be confused about where to go or what to do next. Here is some simple information that will help you decide what to do next. To get more in depth information about Hepatitis C, please call, email or visit our website (see information below). You can also visit www.hcvadvocate.org for Hepatitis information in many languages.

Don't Panic. Many people live **20-40 years** before it starts to affect them.

Get regular medical attention. See other side of paper for free sites you can go to get checked out. Also get vaccinated for Hepatitis A and B so you don't get a second condition related to your liver.

Avoid contact with blood. This means **don't share** equipment, syringes, cookers, cottons, water, even tourniquets. Also don't share pipes as lips can crack and bleed, or straws for snorting drugs. Visit your local **needle exchange** and they will set you up with clean equipment. Another thing, razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, tattoo needles, body piercing needles all may have blood on them- so don't share those either.

Protect your liver. Basically this means everything that you breathe or put into your body goes through your liver. If you can, **lower your alcohol** intake and try not to take acetaminophen, found in Tylenol. Also if you can **lower the amount of salt and fat** in your diet, it will be easier on your liver. **Get enough rest** and **drink plenty of water**. There are also herbs you can take that may help. One good one is **Milk Thistle**, but it has to be 80% Silymarin. If you're on any other medications, check with your doctor before taking the Milk Thistle.

Be concerned about sexual partners. In long-term monogamous couples the rate of transmission is low. If you have **multiple sex** partners and/or have an **STD** the transmission rate **increases**, so use **latex condoms**. If that's not possible use **lots of lube**, as this will lower the amount of friction and decrease the risk of tearing which leads to an increase in blood.

Be informed. Find out what is happening with Hepatitis C at you local **needle exchange** or through the **Hepatitis C Task Force for Los Angeles County**.

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